

Cherwell District Council
Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board

Minutes of a meeting of the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 12 January 2010 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Colin Clarke (Chairman)
Councillor Nicholas Mawer (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Alyas Ahmed
Councillor Margaret Cullip
Councillor Devena Rae
Councillor Carol Steward
Councillor Patricia Tompson
Councillor Douglas Webb
Councillor Martin Weir

Also Present: Councillor James Macnamara

Apologies for absence: Councillor Maurice Billington
Councillor Victoria Irvine
Councillor Keith Strangwood

Officers: Karen Curtin, Head of Finance
Natasha Clark, Trainee Democratic and Scrutiny Officer

37 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

38 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

39 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2009 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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Fees and Charges Update Report 2

The Board considered a report of the Head of Finance which detailed progress on the implementation of the recommendations arising from the Fees and Charges scrutiny review in December 2008 with a particular focus on car park income against budget.

In response to Members questions, the Head of Finance assured the Board that measures had been put in place to ensure future income implications of planned events, developments and redevelopments were included in capital bids. The Board was advised that this was currently part of an Internal Audit review.

Members discussed the advantages and disadvantages of introducing more long term parking options in Bicester and Banbury and introducing evening parking charges. The Board commented that this could be considered as part of the 2011/12 budget process. Members also asked officers to provide supplementary information on the income of Cherwell District Council car parks in comparison to privately owned car parks.

Resolved

- 1) That the contents of the report be noted.

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Update on Budget Scrutiny 2010/2011

The Portfolio Holder Resources and Organisation Development and Head of Finance were present to update Members on the status of the 2010/2011 budget process. They paid particular regard to the outcome of the Executive's consideration of the 14 recommendations (attached at appendix 1 to these minutes) submitted by the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board in December 2009 following their budget scrutiny work in the autumn.

The Head of Finance reported that on 11 January 2010 the Executive had agreed the second draft of the 2010/2011 budget which included the Board's 14 recommendations. With regard to the Capital Programme, the Head of Finance advised Members that all bids with 21 points or lower had been deleted, unless they were necessary or commitment had previously been given. There were currently 36 bids which would be further considered by the Capital Investment Delivery Group against the following criteria: necessary, mandatory, points criteria basis.

With regard to recommendation 9: "That the potential for savings on Christmas Lights (£66K 2009/10) should be considered as part of the 2011/2012 budget process. The process should include early consultation (in Q1 2010) with Banbury Town Council, Bicester Town Council and Kidlington Parish Council", Members requested that officers write to each of the town/parish councils to confirm the current situation.

The Portfolio Holder Resources and Organisational Development advised the Board that the second draft budget had illustrated significant progress in

securing further efficiency savings to reduce the funding gap identified in the first draft from £349,623 to approximately £32k.

The Portfolio Holder Resources and Organisational Development highlighted the draft targets for 2010-2011 within the Corporate Plan. The Board noted that, as in previous years, a set of council tax promises will be drawn from the Corporate Plan targets.

The Board noted that the Executive would consider the third draft of the budget in February 2010. The final version of the budget and the final Corporate Plan targets and promises would be presented to Council on 22 February 2010.

In response to questions, the Head of Finance updated Members on the current situation regarding the Council's investments with the failed Icelandic bank Glitnir. The Board was advised that the Council had been informed that all Local Authority claims would not receive priority creditor status. Under the revised status the Council would recover a significantly reduced amount of investment than previously anticipated.

The Head of Finance informed the Board that the Local Government Association, which was representing a number of Local Authorities, including Cherwell District Council, had lodged an appeal challenging the decision.

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Partnership Scrutiny: Oxfordshire Rural Community Council

The Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which updated Members on the progress to date of the scrutiny review of Oxfordshire Rural Community Council and presented the emerging conclusions for consideration.

The Board considered a briefing paper on alternative delivery methods for Oxfordshire Rural Community Council services (excluding the housing element). Members discussed the options put forward in the briefing paper and agreed that the best option was to maintain the partnership. Members commented that throughout the course of the review it had been apparent that the partnership was critical to the delivery of the Council's rural agenda. Members of the Board noted that as the demand for services varied each year the partnership offered a higher degree of flexibility than an in-house service would be able to offer. However, Members agreed that it was important that a more formal arrangement for the partnership be developed, which could be achieved through the adoption of a Service Level Agreement for the urban/rural and community transport elements of the partnership.

The Board discussed the importance of the role and involvement of elected Members in the Council's partnership with Oxfordshire Rural Community Council specifically, and with all of the Council's partnerships and outside bodies to which the Council appoints a representative in general.

Members noted that whilst the Portfolio Holder Community Safety, Street Scene and Rural had regular briefings with Cherwell District Council Officers, he did not have regular meetings with Oxfordshire Rural Community Council

representatives or attend any meetings arranged by ORCC. The elected Member who had been appointed to ORCC as an outside body representative had not had any contact with the Portfolio Holder, the Cherwell District Council Officers or ORCC.

The Board agreed that it was important for elected Members to be involved in the Council's partnerships/outside bodies. Members were unable to come to a view as to whether the elected representative on the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council should be the Portfolio Holder or a rural ward Member. There were arguments in favour of both options and Members agreed that there were general issues that needed to first be considered relating to the role and involvement of elected Members in the Council's partnerships and as appointed outside body representatives:

- The need for clear guidelines about the roles and responsibilities of elected Members appointed to outside bodies and partnerships, including clarification of Members' interests
- The need for guidelines for partners and outside bodies

The Trainee Democratic and Scrutiny Officer advised the Board that the Head of Improvement was leading a project team undertaking a review of member representation on partnerships and outside bodies on behalf of the Deputy Leader/Portfolio Holder for Environment, Recreation and Health. The Board agreed that the Chairman should meet with the Democratic, Scrutiny and Elections Manager and Scrutiny Officer, who were on the project team, to discuss the review and report back to the Board.

Resolved

- 1) That the contents of the report be noted.
- 2) That the issues arising from the briefing on alternative delivery methods for Oxfordshire Rural Community Council services (excluding the housing element) be noted.
- 3) That the following recommendations be agreed:
 - a) That it be noted that the Council's partnership with Oxfordshire Rural Community Council is an important partnership which should continue and be regarded as critical to the delivery of the rural agenda.
 - b) That a Service Level Agreement for the urban/rural and community transport elements of the partnership be adopted.
 - c) That the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board should monitor progress against each of the above recommendations and review the situation, initially in September 2010.
- 4) That the Chairman of the Resources and Performance Scrutiny meet with the Democratic, Scrutiny and Elections Manager and Scrutiny Officer regarding the review of member representation on partnerships and outside bodies and report back to the Board.

- 5) That agreement of the following draft recommendations be deferred subject to further clarification regarding the role and involvement of elected Members on the Council's partnerships and as appointed representatives on outside bodies:
 - a) That an annual programme of aims/objectives (aligned to the Rural Strategy Action Plan and the Council's corporate priorities) be agreed with Oxfordshire Rural Community Council and regularly reviewed and monitored.
 - b) That the role and involvement of elected Members in the Council's partnership be clarified and strengthened.
 - c) That the elected Member representative should work closely with urban and rural services officers and community transport officers to provide overall steer and direction

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Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2009/2010

The Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services on the overview and scrutiny work programme 2009/10.

Bicester Vision Partnership

The Vice-Chairman, who had been a member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee when it had carried out a review of the Bicester Vision Partnership, advised Members that there were a number of further issues to be considered before the Board could consider proposals to review the Council's continued involvement with Bicester Vision Partnership.

The Board agreed that the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Councillor Steward would arrange a meeting with the Leader of the Council to discuss the Council's involvement with Bicester Vision Partnership and report the outcomes of this meeting to the Board.

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

The Board noted the contents of the report and the existing work programme 2009/10. Members noted that the Portfolio Holder Planning and Housing and Housing Officers would be invited to the Board's February meeting to brief Members on the Registered Social Landlords' Management Group. The Board noted that the Portfolio Holder Community Safety, Street Scene and Rural, the Head of Improvement and the Head of Safer Communities and Community Development would be invited to the Board's February meeting to brief Members on the initial findings of the value for money review of the Cherwell Safer Communities Partnership. This would also be an opportunity for the Board to consider the approach to a scrutiny review of the Cherwell Safer Communities Partnership.

Resolved

- 1) That Councillors Clarke, Mawer and Steward will arrange a meeting with the Leader of the Council to discuss Bicester Vision Partnership and update the Board on the outcomes of this meeting.

- 2) That the current Resources & Performance Scrutiny Board element of the work programme for 2009/10, including the items scheduled for February 2010 meetings be noted.
- 3) That the Portfolio Holder Planning and Housing and Housing Officers be invited to the Board's February meeting to brief Members on the Registered Social Landlords' Management Group
- 4) That the Portfolio Holder Community Safety, Street Scene and Rural, the Head of Improvement and the Head of Safer Communities and Community Development be invited to the Board's February meeting to brief Members on the initial findings of the value for money review of the Cherwell Safer Communities Partnership.

The meeting ended at 8.00 pm

Chairman:

Date: